

CANOEING WITH CARIBS.

A JOURNEY UP THE RIO DULCE IN GUATEMALA-LANANA FARMS.

Guatemala City, Sept. 15.

My object in visiting the Republic of Guatemala was to gratify my curiosity by a few months of travel through a country but little known, to study its form of government, and to acquaint myself as thoroughly as possible with its agricultural and mineral resources and its possibilities for future development. I had read such books as I could obtain, mostly written by chance travellers, and supposed I knew something of the true condition of the country and of the character of its people. A personal visit and examination revealed the fact that the information I had received from books was of little real value in forming an accurate estimate of the people, the country, its present condition or future possibilities.

Entering the country from the Atlantic side, I landed at Livingston, passed up the Rio Dulce, through the Lake of Yzabal, paddled up the Rio Polochic for several days in a canoe, crossed the spurs and followed the valleys of the Sierra de las Santa Cruz, the Sierra de Chama and the Sierra de las Minas on muleback, until weary and sore from the long journey I reached the capital, weary, but wiser as to that part of the country and its resources than I otherwise could have been.

This route was not according to my original plan. My intention was to take the route from Yzabal direct to the capital, but, learning that it was impossible to secure animals from that point, I secured a canoe at Livingston and a crew of four strong Caribs, and on the 6th last started on the canoe voyages up the Rio Dulce. The magnificence of the scenery along this short river can hardly be overdrawn. The perpendicular walls of volcanic rock, rising sheer from the water to a height of 500 to 600 feet, clothed with palms intermingled with many other tropical trees and vines, presented a picture rarely equalled. It was not introduction to the tropics, and a very delightful one. Occasionally the banks of the rock would present itself as if to demonstrate by its peculiar formation its igneous origin. My curiosity was excited by the statement of our Carib boatmen that at a certain place on the rocks were some curious monoliths, and I waited for them, expecting to see for the first time the tracing or writing of the mysterious Toltecs or possibly of a more ancient people. The gestures of the crew indicated the spot "Yenivid," and this is what I read: "For hardware go to R. B. Wells, Wallerville, Texas." Can Yankee enterprise equal this? The painting upon the rocks of old conjectures placed these by imagination to the occupants of the land. Entering the Golite, the bold shores dropped into swelling hills, and from the slope of the hills the land rose gradually into distant mountain.

From Livingston to the head of the lake the cultivation of the banana seemed the only occupation of the people, and it was a surprise to note the character of the land selected for this purpose. The steep hillsides seemed the favorite, and hills 500 feet high with sides at an angle of sixty degrees were exposed to the sun's summit with luxuriant plants. Among the boulders and broken rocks plants were growing and bending under the weight of fruit. Every foot of land can be utilized from the waters edge up by some valuable crop, and the agriculturist has but to determine what the crop shall be, select his proper location and plant his seed. It is a practical exemplification of "you touch the button and we do the rest." Place the seed or plant in the ground, and Nature takes care that there shall be an abundant harvest. The two articles now raised for export from Livingston are coffee and bananas—bananas from Lake Yzabal to the coast and coffee in the mountains at elevations from 2,500 feet to 4,000 feet above the sea. Upon either side of the river and the lake are large banana plantations a study under cultivation and many others in process of preparation; but there are thousands of acres of land perfectly adapted for this purpose still unoccupied, although the demand for the fruit is largely in excess of the supply and although the profits are fabulous. Ship owners are eager to make contracts for fruit three or five years in advance, and are unable to secure the desired amount. All unoccupied land was originally owned by the Government, and such as still remains can be secured by a process called denouncing, similar to pre-emption in the States. The cost of a banana farm or plantation is in clearing and preparing the land, which requires time, labor and money. The growth of trees, shrubs and tropical vines must be cleared away and burned before the banana can be planted, but once started, the plantation remains in bearing for years. The plant matures one bunch and when this is ready for cutting the entire plant is cut off near the ground, the bunch of fruit removed, and the large succulent stalk is allowed to remain upon the ground and rot, while a new stalk starts from the bulb and in turn matures its bunch of fruit. A plantation is therefore in constant bearing and cuttings of fruit continue each month of the year.

On a large area, cutting from 100,000 to 150,000 bunches annually, the great mass of decaying vegetable matter is the source of much disease, probably aggravating other causes and producing the epidemic fevers which so frequently ravage the coast, while the dread of this fever deters many from emigrating in the industry.

Notwithstanding this dread and danger, the profits are so large and sure that every year new farms are cleared and planted and the production is rapidly increasing. Fifty thousand dollars a year is a small estimate for a banana farm cutting the number of bunches stated, and eighty per cent of this amount is net profit. The labor is performed entirely by Indians, who receive an average of two reals, 25 cents, a day for their labor.

The plantations, when once started, require no care, except during the active bearing period. The grain speculations were more active yesterday than at any time since the market was established, and wheat, corn, oats, rye, barley, buckwheat, beans, peas, etc., were all in demand. The market was quiet, and the grain quotations advanced by 1 1/2 to 2 cents.

Corn was unchanged, with wheat 1 1/2 cents, oats 1 cent, rye 1/2 cent, barley 1/2 cent, buckwheat 1/2 cent, beans 1/2 cent, peas 1/2 cent, etc. The arrival of wheat, 167,962 bushels, corn, 44,000 bushels, rye, 20,000 bushels, total grain, 1,075,222 bushels, flour, 200,000 barrels.

I noticed the Carib women brimming from the fields large bunches of freshly cut sugar cane, and nearly all, both old and young, had sticks in their hands from which they cut slices which they constantly chewed the saccharine stalk furnishing a nutritious juice which supplied the place of food. Many of these canes were two and one-half and sometimes three inches in diameter, and exceedingly rich in sugar, but are grown by these people simply as an article of food. Occasionally the juices expressed by the Carib women, evaporated and formed into balls of black sugar; but, so far as I could learn, there is no attempt made to manufacture sugar for market in this section, or to grow the cane in marketable quantities.

In fact, there is no inducement for the natives on the coast to try to produce more than they can consume of anything save fruit, because there is no market for it. A sugar factory at any point on the Rio Dulce, or Pocteche, would be a bold mine to its owner and a blessing to the people. The banana trees are found as far inland as the upper end of Lake Yzabal, but with the present facilities for transportation it is impossible to get the fruit to the ship in marketable condition from a longer distance. From the mouth of the Polochic River, where it enters the lake, the level shore spreads out upon either side, forming a wide plain, now covered with a rank growth of tropical vegetation, but especially adapted by location and climatic condition for the cultivation of cotton. Small quantities of the plant have been grown on the flat lands, sufficient to demonstrate the feasibility of its cultivation but the enterprise and capital required is wanting, and will not be furnished until foreigners supply the demand. No better cotton land exists in the world than that lying unused along the Rio Polochic between the upper end of Lake Yzabal and Pocteche, and the cost of preparing this land would be small in comparison with the preparation of land for other purposes. The proposition to construct the Northern Railroad called attention to the value of lands bordering the Motagua River, and although those lands are of far less value for fruit and agricultural purposes, they have mostly been taken either by speculators or actual settlers, and are held at high prices. Along the Polochic however, the lands are mostly open for settlers at the cost of occupancy.

At Panzós, now the head of navigation on the Polochic, the character of the country changes on the rocks were some curious monoliths, and I waited for them, expecting to see for the first time the tracing or writing of the mysterious Toltecs or possibly of a more ancient people. The gestures of the crew indicated the spot "Yenivid," and this is what I read: "For hardware go to R. B. Wells, Wallerville, Texas." Can Yankee enterprise equal this? The painting upon the rocks of old conjectures placed these by imagination to the occupants of the land. Entering the Golite, the bold shores dropped into swelling hills, and from the slope of the hills the land rose gradually into distant mountain.

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THE MARKETS.

TOTAL RECEIPTS.

	Nov. 11.	Nov. 12.	Nov. 13.	Nov. 14.	Nov. 15.	Nov. 16.	Nov. 17.	Nov. 18.	Nov. 19.	Nov. 20.	Nov. 21.	Nov. 22.	Nov. 23.	Nov. 24.	Nov. 25.	Nov. 26.	Nov. 27.	Nov. 28.	Nov. 29.	Nov. 30.	Nov. 31.	Dec. 1.	Dec. 2.	Dec. 3.	Dec. 4.	Dec. 5.	Dec. 6.	Dec. 7.	Dec. 8.	Dec. 9.	Dec. 10.	Dec. 11.	Dec. 12.	Dec. 13.	Dec. 14.	Dec. 15.	Dec. 16.	Dec. 17.	Dec. 18.	Dec. 19.	Dec. 20.	Dec. 21.	Dec. 22.	Dec. 23.	Dec. 24.	Dec. 25.	Dec. 26.	Dec. 27.	Dec. 28.	Dec. 29.	Dec. 30.	Dec. 31.	Jan. 1.	Jan. 2.	Jan. 3.	Jan. 4.	Jan. 5.	Jan. 6.	Jan. 7.	Jan. 8.	Jan. 9.	Jan. 10.	Jan. 11.	Jan. 12.	Jan. 13.	Jan. 14.	Jan. 15.	Jan. 16.	Jan. 17.	Jan. 18.	Jan. 19.	Jan. 20.	Jan. 21.	Jan. 22.	Jan. 23.	Jan. 24.	Jan. 25.	Jan. 26.	Jan. 27.	Jan. 28.	Jan. 29.	Jan. 30.	Jan. 31.	Feb. 1.	Feb. 2.	Feb. 3.	Feb. 4.	Feb. 5.	Feb. 6.	Feb. 7.	Feb. 8.	Feb. 9.	Feb. 10.	Feb. 11.	Feb. 12.	Feb. 13.	Feb. 14.	Feb. 15.	Feb. 16.	Feb. 17.	Feb. 18.	Feb. 19.	Feb. 20.	Feb. 21.	Feb. 22.	Feb. 23.	Feb. 24.	Feb. 25.	Feb. 26.	Feb. 27.	Feb. 28.	Feb. 29.	Feb. 30.	Feb. 31.	Mar. 1.	Mar. 2.	Mar. 3.	Mar. 4.	Mar. 5.	Mar. 6.	Mar. 7.	Mar. 8.	Mar. 9.	Mar. 10.	Mar. 11.	Mar. 12.	Mar. 13.	Mar. 14.	Mar. 15.	Mar. 16.	Mar. 17.	Mar. 18.	Mar. 19.	Mar. 20.	Mar. 21.	Mar. 22.	Mar. 23.	Mar. 24.	Mar. 25.	Mar. 26.	Mar. 27.	Mar. 28.	Mar. 29.	Mar. 30.	Mar. 31.	Apr. 1.	Apr. 2.	Apr. 3.	Apr. 4.	Apr. 5.	Apr. 6.	Apr. 7.	Apr. 8.	Apr. 9.	Apr. 10.	Apr. 11.	Apr. 12.	Apr. 13.	Apr. 14.	Apr. 15.	Apr. 16.	Apr. 17.	Apr. 18.	Apr. 19.	Apr. 20.	Apr. 21.	Apr. 22.	Apr. 23.	Apr. 24.	Apr. 25.	Apr. 26.	Apr. 27.	Apr. 28.	Apr. 29.	Apr. 30.	Apr. 31.	May. 1.	May. 2.	